



INL intern Michalena Grosshans accepts a scholarship from DOE Office of Science Associate Director Bill Valdez (left), and Oak Ridge National Laboratory Science and Technology Deputy Jim Roberto at the DOE Science and Energy Research Challenge (SERCh) competition.

INL interns honored at DOE competition

by Keith Arterburn, *INL Communications*

The U.S. Department of Energy Office of Science recently honored two Idaho National Laboratory interns at its 2008 Science and Energy Research Challenge (SERCh) Poster Competition at Oak Ridge National Laboratory. Michalena Grosshans and Mary Weston were among 84 students honored at the November event.

Grosshans won third place and a \$1,000 scholarship in the biological sciences competition for her bioforensic methods to detect *Brucella abortus*. The bacterium causes Brucellosis, which affects Western wildlife and has been developed as a biowarfare agent. Grosshans, who was mentored by INL researcher Frank Roberto, is a junior at Ohio Northern University majoring in biology.

□ ***Mary Weston, a senior biochemistry major at Indiana's DePauw University, is engineering bacterial metabolism to produce biodegradable plastics.***

Weston, whom Roberto also mentored, was one of 84 students selected from more than 170 applicants to participate in the final competition. The senior, a biochemistry major at DePauw University in Indiana, worked on metabolic engineering of *Alicyclobacillus acidocaldarius* for the production of lactic acid, a precursor for biodegradable plastics.

Both students are participants in the Science Undergraduate Laboratory Internship program at INL. Grosshans is the daughter of INL and Center for Advanced Energy Studies employee Ray Grosshans.

"Michalena Grosshans and Mary Weston are two students who show great promise," Roberto said.

□ ***INL intern Michalena Grosshans won a \$1,000 scholarship in the biological sciences competition for her bioforensic methods to detect *Brucella abortus*.***

"The SULI program has always provided us with outstanding student interns," he said. "Michalena and Mary typify the smart, enthusiastic students that apply to the program, and who we have no doubt will be successful beyond their college careers. I am proud of both of them for their strong performances in the Science and Energy Research Challenge competition for 2008."

The final competition included students who studied materials science, physics, environmental science, chemistry and biology. They won \$3,000 scholarships for first place, \$1,500 scholarships for second place and \$1,000 scholarships for third place. The top prize among all competitors was \$10,000 awarded to a student whose poster on global climate change modeling was researched at ORNL.

During the competition weekend, students, their faculty advisers and laboratory employees attended seminars and toured user facilities at ORNL. In a DOE news release, Bill Valdez, director of Workforce Development for Teachers and Scientists for DOE's Office of Science, said the students and their research "represent the future of our nation and how we will stay an innovative economy for decades to come."

Read the [DOE news release](#) about this competition.

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